

Millington Police Department

Police Study

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service

Introduction

This study was conducted by field study work involving interviews, reviews of documentation, and physical inspection of the facilities and other equipment.

Nothing in this report should be construed as being a negative reflection of the Millington Police Department. In fact, the officers of the department appear to be conscientious, hardworking police officers. This report will attempt to provide an outside perspective of police operations and future needs of the police department. This report is broken into several individual sections, but some recommendations may appear in more than one section. Major recommendations appear in each section and at the end of the report. Some additional recommendations appear in the text.

Personnel

1. Staffing Level

The certified population of Millington is 10,176. The department currently budgets for 34 full-time police officers. The average staffing level for municipal police departments in the United States is 2.5 police officers per one thousand residents. In Tennessee the average is about 2.54 officers. The current staffing level for the Millington Police Department is 3.34 officers per one thousand citizens, based on the city's current certified population and a fully staffed department. At the time of the field work for this study the department employed 30 full-time officers (four vacancies). That number of full-time officers results in a staffing level of 2.95 officers per one thousand citizens. The fact that the staffing level is above the national average *does not* mean that the Millington Police Department is overstaffed. Average staffing levels are just that: *averages*. Some bedroom communities have considerably lower staffing levels. Full service cities, with substantial commercial development, tend to have higher staffing levels.

There is no magic formula for determining the best staffing level for a police department. The optimum staffing level is ***absolutely*** dependent on the desired level of police services, not on any average. A police department can respond to all calls for service with far fewer police officers than would be required to do preventive policing and thorough investigations.

The current staffing level is somewhat lower than in recent years. Some positions vacated by normal attrition, including command level positions, have been left unfilled due to the faltering

economy of the last few years. Additionally, the city has purposely eliminated positions to reduce cost during the recession.

The following table shows certain demographic data for Millington and nearby full service cities and crime data from the same cities. The crime data in particular should show the need for a higher staffing level than the state average. The city has recently started participating in crime reduction strategies with the Shelby County Sheriff's Department. There is a strong potential that better use of available resources may have as much impact on crime levels as higher staffing levels.

	Median Income per Household (1)	Median Home Value (1)	% of Housing Renter Occupied (1)	TIBRS Group A Offenses/ 100,000 (2)	Arrests per 100,000 (2)
Millington	\$44,378.00	\$115,939.00	52	13,864.8	9,678.6
Germantown	\$108,786.00	\$276,647.00	11	2,707.5	2,940.7
Collierville	\$98,501.00	\$267,945.00	14	4,345.5	3,370.5
Bartlett	\$73,168.00	\$168,444.00	8	4,867.3	4,688.5
Tennessee	\$41,693.00	\$138,300.00	45	8,397.8	5,775.7

(1) City-data.com

(2) Crime in Tennessee 2013, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation

The department should continue to utilize data driven policing strategies with the sheriff's department to more effectively utilize existing staff. However, it is imperative that the department fill the vacant positions.

2. Manpower Allocation

The department currently utilizes traditional eight hour shifts. Under a previous city manager the department implemented 12 hour shifts, but most officers were apparently unhappy with that schedule. At the time of the field work for this study the department was just beginning to work with the Shelby County Sheriff's Department in using data driven crime suppression and prevention strategies. The department has an adequate records management system to develop sufficient data to use in allocating resources relative to demand (time of day, day of week, etc.).

The overall rank structure of the patrol division and detective division is adequate for a department of this size and does not interfere with allocation of line level officers or detectives. Given the demand on patrol and investigations, any additional police officer resources should be directed to line level operations.

The department is in dire need of administrative resources. Aside from jailer/dispatchers, there is ONE support staff position. Police officers, primarily supervisors and command staff officers, perform clerical work, even manning the reception desk during lunch breaks.

At one time the department had a small narcotics unit. During the economic recession the unit was disbanded when the department eliminated positions. Most criminal activity is connected in some form or fashion to illicit drug use. As the department fills the four open positions, it should assign two or three officers to a “street crimes” unit that would work to suppress street crimes, including illicit drug use.

The department should add AT LEAST one support staff position, serving administration, criminal investigations and training.

As the department fills the four open positions, it should assign two or three officers to a “street crimes” unit.

Equipment and Training

Equipment

While several folks mentioned that the department’s equipment is better than it used to be, there are several shortcomings relative to equipment.

The department has been utilizing worn out surplus vehicles from the Shelby County Sheriff’s Department. It should be noted that the sheriff’s department stopped using the cars *because they were worn out*. The city should be providing safe and reliable vehicles for police services. New vehicles are safer, more reliable, and they should cost far less to maintain.

In almost every city there is an annual struggle to find funds to purchase new police cars. The availability of the drug fund for non-recurring general law enforcement expenditures reduces the budgetary tug-of-war to some extent, but the use of funds from the drug fund for vehicle purchases can have a significant impact on the fund. The city should consider establishing a fleet replacement program for all vehicles in the city. Such a program requires the city to annually budget a prorated portion of the eventual replacement cost of each vehicle into a fund. At the end of the useful life of the vehicle there would be adequate funds for the replacement. To the extent that the continued use of a vehicle is still cost-effective at the end of its expected life, the vehicle can be retained, creating a “cushion” of funds in the fleet replacement fund. This fund is treated the same as a special revenue fund, such as the solid waste fund or the drug fund. The fleet replacement fund will eliminate the annual exercise of trying to determine which capital needs will be met and which will be delayed due to a tight budget. The Finance and Accounting consultants with MTAS can assist the city in developing the program.

The department recently added radar units to the last remaining patrol cars. However, there are only four video units in the cars. Video cameras should be considered standard equipment in every patrol car or for every patrol officer. Many departments are utilizing body cameras for police officers, rather than video cameras mounted in the cars. The city should ensure that one or the other is available for every officer.

Facility

The police department is housed in a facility that was once the headquarters and jail of the navy law enforcement unit. While suitable as a jail, the facility does not serve the police department well. There should be a public accessible area, secure from the rest of the facility. Citizens seeking entry have to wait outside until someone presses a button to unlock the door. The heating and cooling systems seem antiquated, and the city might save money with more efficient systems.

The department has taken a building with existing walls and tried to fit the police department functions to the building. A better approach would have been to remodel the building to suit the needs of the police department. This can still be done, and the city should contract with an engineering firm to identify the department's needs and make recommendations for modifications.

The building needs a thorough cleaning, including new paint.

At the time of the field work for the study, the department utilized a "drop box" to introduce certain types of property and evidence into the property room after regular business hours. Other property and evidence that could not be introduced through the drop box was stored temporarily in offices. This will be discussed in depth later in this report, but the department needs to install suitable short-term storage to allow officers to securely store property and evidence after regular business hours.

The city should consider establishing a fleet replacement program for all vehicles in the city.

The city should purchase an adequate number of vehicle video cameras or body cameras to ensure that all patrol officers have access to recording devices each shift.

The city should contract with an engineering firm for a needs analysis of the police department headquarters and renovate the facility.

The department should purchase modern short-term storage systems for the property room.

Training

Most officers go through other department's in-service training programs to fulfill the state mandated training requirements. Few officers are assigned to attend specialized training classes away from the department. Budget constraints may play a part in the lack of off-site training, but there are many free or cost effective training programs available in the state.

Several folks complained that the department does little more than the state minimum in firearms training. Given the high exposure to liability, most departments provide far more than the minimum. Cost of training, particularly the cost of training ammunition, is one reason for the minimum training. State law allows police departments to trade firearms that were seized as

evidence or otherwise used or possessed illegally for ammunition. As the police department identifies those firearms and prepares them for disposition, trading for ammunition should be a high priority.

The department should develop a professional development plan for each position in the department. There should be a schedule of classes that the department determines to be important for each position. As an officer is hired as a patrol officer, or is transferred/promoted to another position, the training officer would assign the officer to training classes based on the prioritized schedule of training classes.

An example of such a training schedule for a patrol officer might include:

- Basic accident investigation
- Crime scene preservation and investigation
- Customer service
- Spanish language for field officers
- Patrol level drug investigations

No one in the department has attended any high level police command school. Over the past couple of decades, most chiefs hired by the department have come from outside the department. There has been little interest in preparing police department employees for leadership. As part of the professional development plan, the department should identify senior officers with the ability and willingness to progress to positions of leadership and send those officers to high level command and leadership training. Suitable training includes, but is not limited to:

- FBI National Academy
- Southern Police Institute
- Northwestern Staff and Command School
- Southeastern Command and Leadership Academy

The department should develop a professional development plan for each position in the department.

The department should provide supervisory and management training for officers aspiring to those types of positions, before actually being promoted.

The department should provide high level command and leadership training to senior officers capable and willing to ascend to positions of leadership in the department.

Management and Administration

At the time of the field work for this study Rita Stanback was serving as the chief of police. One of the expected outcomes of this study was a review of the effectiveness of the police chief. It was impossible to do so. The department was divided into two distinct camps: Those supportive of the police chief and those who wanted to see her removed.

There was an obvious attempt on the part of some individuals to provide information that would undermine the police chief. Their responses during the interviews and their complaints to the interim city manager could pretty much be described as “throwing the chief under a bus.” It is unlikely any police chief could be effective without some semblance of support from command staff members and supervisors. Prior to this report Chief Stanback has agreed to a reassignment within the police department, and the department is currently searching for a new police chief. It is important that the city hire a new chief who has strong leadership skills to lead the department out of this divisive culture. Given the current culture, it is recommended that the city hire a police chief from outside the department and someone who has no ties to current employees.

As has been mentioned, the department had recently joined data driven crime reduction efforts of the Shelby County Sheriff’s Department. Given the current crime rate, this partnership is very important. The partnership should be enlarged to include the City of Bartlett. The close proximity of the two cities results in sharing many of the same crime problems (criminals).

There are no regular in-house meetings of the leadership of the various divisions and units to address ongoing crime issues in the community. Any such meetings tend to be used to address departmental issues. The importance of such meetings will be addressed later in this section of the report.

The administrative functions of the department include police records and communications. This study did not address the records division or communications. While not a part of the study, it was noted the police department has a very sophisticated records and citations system. There are few departments of this size that make use of “real time” electronic citations, crash reports and criminal records management. With the limited capital outlay involved, the department has done a terrific job.

The property and evidence functions are the responsibility of the CID unit. The vast majority of items introduced into the system come from the CID unit. There is no real conflict with the CID supervisor serving in that position, but the possible perception of conflict would support assigning an officer or civilian who is not directly associated with the detective units.

The property and evidence functions in the department were found to be severely lacking. As was mentioned earlier, there was no mechanism for securely introducing property and evidence into the system when a property custodian was not on duty. Such items were stored in an office where several individuals had access. Evidence from a recent ongoing armed robbery was found sitting on a table in an open area frequented by any member of the department. Both the outside door

and the hallway door were standing open. The officer in charge of the property at that time willingly left the room without securing the evidence or the room.

There were numerous firearms and items of drug evidence that had not been involved in any case for long periods of time. It should be noted that state law defines a maximum time period for disposal of firearms, and the state comptroller's office defines the allowable time frame for disposal of drug evidence. Many items in the property room far exceeded either time frame.

There should be at least an annual audit of the property and evidence function, involving department personnel from all divisions. Such an annual audit would have prevented the property and evidence function from sliding into such a state of dysfunction.

Most of the patrol officers in the department have less than seven years of experience. There are a number of seasoned officers, including command staff and supervisors with more than fifteen years of experience. There aren't very many officers between those two groups. As officers become experienced, thus valuable assets, they often leave to work elsewhere. The city recognizes the pay and benefits are not competitive, and that is probably the primary reason for officers leaving. Failure to provide safe and reliable vehicles and specialized training when those things are common in surrounding law enforcement agencies also contributes.

At the time of the field work for this study, the department was going through the "self-assessment" phase of the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation Program. Self-assessment means the department was comparing its policies and procedures with state recognized standards. Prior to the completion of this study the department became accredited. This is a great accomplishment, and the department and its staff are to be commended. The Millington Police Department, and ultimately the citizens of the city, will continue to benefit from participation in the accreditation program.

It is important that the next chief maintain accreditation and make sure the process is more than merely creating paperwork and files. For instance, the accreditation standards require a written directive defining protocols for handling property and evidence. During this study, it was observed that the department was not following its own protocols. State accreditation standards mandate procedures that will result in periodic audits such as mentioned above.

The city should hire a new police chief from outside the department and someone with no ties to any current member of the department.

The department should plan for future successions by developing senior officers with high level command training and increasing responsibility.

Initiate a process for weekly command staff meetings to plan proactive approaches for dealing with crime issues in the community.

The department should maintain accreditation through the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation Program.

The department should appoint a property custodian outside the CID unit.

There should be annual audits of the property and evidence function, involving department members from all divisions of the department.

Closing Comments

The recommendations made in this report should not be considered as a negative reflection of the department, but rather opportunities to “tweak” the process. The Board and the citizens can be proud of this police department.

The department is faced with significant leadership challenges, but those challenges offer opportunities to infuse the department with new ideas and processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- *The department should continue to utilize data driven policing strategies with the sheriff's department to more effectively utilize existing staff. However, it is imperative that the department fill the vacant positions.*
- *The department should add AT LEAST one support staff position, serving administration, criminal investigations and training.*
- *As the department fills the four open positions, it should assign two or three officers to a "street crimes" unit.*
- *The city should consider establishing a fleet replacement program for all vehicles in the city.*
- *The city should purchase an adequate number of vehicle video cameras or body cameras to ensure that all patrol officers have access to recording devices each shift.*
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